252 nels, or crushed and baked into a cake with nug or linseed
262 oil. The porridge of non-fast times is called "genfo". It is made of crushed wheat, barley, butter and curdled milk. In fast times nug and linseed are substituted for the forbidden butter and milk. A fast drink consists of [272] tyeff flour boiled in salt water, called "hu".

Other religious food taboos include the pig, which is never raised, except for European's use. This taboo dates back to Judaism and the Old Testament.

Every householder usually has a supply of roasted kernels "qolo" available in case unexpected guests or kin come to visit, a frequent occurrence. The pattern of "qolo" is very similar to that of a linguistically equivalent concept in Yemen. The Amhara makes it mostly of barley, "gebs qolo", but also of shembera and of maize.

[263] Condiments taken along on trips include an oily paste made of nug or linseed. When this is also spiced, salted, or mixed with honey, it is called "chelqa". It [272] resembles a gummy porridge. The traveller can mix it with water and instantly have a drink which is regarded not only as thirst-quenching, but also as strength-giving. However, no one claims that the taste is good.

● 264 There are two major meals per day: midday lunch, a light meal, though it may feature both "enjära" and "wot"; and the heavier supper, "erät", the main meal consumed in the cool of the early evening around the hearth of the hut, with bread, meat stew, barley beer and condiments. Breakfast as such is not eaten, except for a handful of roasted barley, and, if the household can afford it, black coffee.

1: Messing E-5 (1953-1954)1957 MP5 Amhara MP5

867
[539] "He, before becoming old,
wants to be serious".

(This is also said of a young man who saves gifts for a bride before he has chosen a girl).

When the adolescent boys take part in the aforementioned ritual mock-battles, younger boys imitate them by staging similar hazing-battles among their age peers.

Little girls are encultured in somewhat similar fashion by peers of their own sex, but more often including some older girls who patronize the younger. Girls are not taught any social graces among commoner Amharas, so that they sit shyly and wordless when in the company of men. Any girl who shows signs of daring is mocked and hazed as "gobba" (daring, enterprising female). Generally the activities of girls are less violent,. At times when boys fight their ritual mock-battles, girls dance rounds and sing in unison.

Both boys and girls are taught to be right-handed, and a
[264 "lefty" is extremely rare. They are taught to eat with the right
576] hand, shake hands with the right, and use the left for wiping
514 themselves with leaves after defecating. But the prohibition against use of the left hand on other occasions is not as severe as among Arabs.

[754] Both sexes fear the supernatural "buda" spirit, also in the shape of human sorcerer and magical hyena. Older boys claim they can distinguish the cry of a real hyena from that of a magical one, and sometimes scare younger children by imitating the howl.

867
302 Sex differentiation among children is expressed in the hair style. Boys wear a single coxcomb hairlock, girls a ring of hair around the shaven skull which sometimes may contain a center hair-

574 Wednesday or Friday when no animal products can be consumed; the months
262 of lent also interrupt the frequency of visiting.

To honor a "great man" ("telleq säw") the host presents him with a live sheep, select, with a heavy tail, then has it slaughtered and cooked in a spicy and peppery sauce ("wot"). In place of barley beer he will offer honeywater ("bərz") or even honeymead ("täj"); the bread will be served smeared with spiced butter. A poor man, forced to substitute chicken for sheep, can at least indicate that he honors the guest by giving him the choice morsel - the wing: The proverb says:

[539]

"The chicken wing
joy brings to the face".

264 Etiquette in eating follows these procedures: The hands are washed prior to consuming bread or meat (though often with not very clean, muddy river water poured from a clay pot); and washed again after the meal to remove pepper stains of the "bärbäre wot" from the fingers, lest absentminded rubbing of the eye cause painful stinging. Only the right hand is used in eating, for the left is used in the toilet. The right hand is used to rip off a piece of the limp "enjära", dip it into the meat stew, close the piece of pancake-like bread around some morsel and fish it out for immediate consumption. A knife is used only when eating "brundo" (raw beef), at a special feast, to cut off a piece held between the teeth (now, at city feasts, brundo is served pre-sliced into cubes).

Noisy eating ("gorädda") is permitted in the old tradition as indicative of he-man behavior, but smacking of lips and ceremonial belching, though not criticized, are not emphasized. It is an old custom of Amhara hosts, still followed in rural areas, to pour a mouthful of a prefferred drink into their own cupped hands and consume it, before passing the cup to the honored guest or "great man" ("ejun däqno täta"- lit. he received (cup) with hands (under chin) and drank). This

264 procedure, also called "qämmäsä" is in imitation of procedure at the court of nobles, and it is known that kings have always had their special cupbearers ("qänash") who tasted the drink against possible poison, and who also removed any floating debris ("qäffäta") such as beeswax from the drink.

574 The hospitality group on non-kin members which meets most
575 regularly, once a month, is the "mähabbär" association, already described. Based originally on religious private communion, each member plays host once a month to drink from "Mary's cup" ("yänaryas sewa"), to feast, for chant and dance ("zäffän") and less formal gossipy entertainment and conversation ("tächäwwäta").

C. Verbal Expression: Formalities; Wit; Pedagogic Riddles.

192 Emotional exclamations in everyday use are highly formalized:

Pain - "häyy häyy" (also if a painful truth "sinks in"; astonishment).

Fear - "wyy" (especially by women, just before a fearful event happens).

Fearful surprise - "oyyi" (e.g. when someone stumbles, or has an accident).

Alarm - "errii" - (cry of alarm; also of great sorrow as in death of kin).

Skeptical surprise - "arrä" ("you don't say?!"); Reply: "mut" (abbreviated from "yemut", lit. "May (the emperor die) if this is not true").

Pleasure - "essäy" (to indicate comfort, e.g. when sitting down after having climbed a long, tiring hill).

576 Formal politeness in etiquette always considers the social status
514 of the person addressed. Thus, there are six ways of informing an
192 inquirer that the person he seeks has gone out to defecate or urinate:

Impolite, though not vulgar: "wäha afässäsä" - (lit. he poured water).

Polite: "der wätta" - lit. he went to the bush).

Polite: "däj wätta" - (lit. he went out the door).

4: Alvarez M-5 (1520-1526) 1881
MP5 Amhara MP5

346 is painted, it is not certain whether it is stone or wood. It has two sets of cloisters round the body of the church, both 346 covered in, and much painted with figures of apostles, 532 patriarchs, prophets, and many things of the Old Law, and 353 many angels, and St. George on horseback, who is in all the churches. This monastery also possesses a great cloth, like a piece of tapestry, on which is the crucifix and effigy of Our Lady and the apostles, and other figures of patriarchs and prophets, and each one has his Latin name written, so that no man of the country made it. It has many small and ancient pictures, not well made, and they are not upon the altars, for it is not their custom: they keep them in a [212] sacristy, mixed up with many books, and they bring them out on feast days. There is in this monastery a very large kitchen and bakehouse, also a very large refectory, in which 792 they eat. They mostly eat three and three[1] in a large dish, 262 it is not deep, but flat like a tray, and their food is very [264] poor. The bread is of maize and barley, and other grain which they call *taffo*,[2] a small black grain. They make this bread round, and of the size and roundness of a citron,[3] and they give three of these to each friar: to the novices they give three loaves to two of them, it is a matter of amazement how they can maintain themselves. They also give them a few vegetables, without salt or oil. Of this food they send to a great many old pensioners, who do not come to the refectory. Besides seeing these things when we 792 buried Matthæus, I saw them many times, because I came there to pass time with the friars, principally on feast days, when we were near there. In this way I learned about them and their property, and revenues and customs. In my opinion there were generally always a hundred friars in this

[1] By threes.

[2] Mansfield Parkins calls it teff. the species of corn most esteemed in this country.

[3] Zamboa, not referred to in Selves' translation.

4: Alvarez M-5 (1520-1526) 1881
MP5 Amhara MP5

CAP. XIX.—*How they gave us to eat in the house of the Barnagais, and how in this country the journeys are not reckoned by leagues.* 648

When we were out of the house where the Barnagais was, they made us sit down in the receiving room of another house on mats on the ground, and they brought here a large trencher of barley meal, but little kneaded, and a horn of mead. And, since we had not seen such food, we would not eat it; but when we were more accustomed to the country we ate it readily. Without eating of this, we arose and came to our resting-place and then set out. This might be at two hours before midday. Having gone on our road half a league or more there came to us a man running and telling us to wait; that the mother of the Barnagais was sending us food, and took it as a misfortune our coming away without eating and not accepting the food they gave us, which was that customary in the country. We waited, and the food came to us, that is to say, five large rolls of wheat bread and a horn of mead. Let not anyone be amazed who hears of a horn of wine, because for the great lords and Prester John cows' horns are their cups for wine, and there are horns holding five or six canadas.[1] Besides this, the mother of the Barnagais sent us some of the same kneaded flour, and now we ate some of it. This meal is of parched barley, made into flour, and they mix it up with very little water, and so eat it. After this banquet we made our way to the town of Barua, where our goods and companions had remained. In this country, and in all the kingdoms of Prester John, there are no leagues, and if you ask how far it is from this place to such a place, they say: If you depart in the morning at sunrise, you will arrive when the sun is in such a place; and if you travel slowly you will arrive there when they shut up the cows, that is at

[264] [262] [415] [262] 804

[1] A Portuguese measure equal to about three pints.

4: Alvarez M-5 (1520-1526) 1881
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of Braga, put to Francisco Alvarez, chaplain of the king our sovereign, respecting some particulars of the country of Prester John, beyond those which the said Francisco Alvarez has written in his book; the said Francisco Alvarez having gone to the said Prester in the company of Don Rodrigo de Lima, who went as ambassador to the said Prester, on account of the death of Duarte Galvam, who was sent there by the King Don Manuel, may he be in holy glory; which persons reached the port of Masua, an island in the Red Sea, close to the town of Arquico, country of the Prester, on the 27th day of April 1520, and they passed six[1] years in the said country and lordships of the Prester, and they returned to embark at the said port of Masua, close to Arquico, in the year 1526 on the 28th day of April; and the said Francisco Alvarez came to this city of Braga to be confirmed in the benefice which the King our sovereign gave him. He remained in it some days, and the said Francisco Alvarez reached this city of Braga on the 30th July, of the year 1529.

He said that usually the people do not eat only once a day, and this at night, and that the monks and clergy fast strictly during Lent, so that many only eat three times in the week, namely, Tuesdays, Thursdays, and Saturdays, that they do not drink wine of grapes nor of honey, and that they drink other beverages which are made of other vegetables.

In Lent they eat neither meat not milk, nor eggs nor butter, even though they are near dying, they eat vegetables and some few fruits which are in the country. All the men and women, great and small, fast all the Wednesdays and Fridays in the year; this is not to be understood from Christmas to the Purification of Our Lady, nor from Easter to Trinity, when there is no fast. Friars, priests, gentlemen and noblemen, fast all the week excepting Saturday and Sunday.

[1] Should be seven years.

1 [the author, i.e., Alvarez]

4: Alvarez M-5 (1520-1526) 1881
MP5 Amhara MP5

He said that no men died at the hands of justice, that they flogged many, and put out the eyes of some, and of others they cut off a foot or a hand, according to the quality the crime; but that he had seen a man burned because he was found to have committed two robberies in a church.

That the Pope or Patriarch of the country of Prester John is called Abima, which means father, and that there is nobody else in all the kingdoms and lordships of the Prester who confers orders except him.

The Prester John is called Acegue,[1] which means emperor, and he is called Neguz, which means king.

There is no manner of physic, only they apply fire; in some sickness they use cupping without fire, and for headaches, they bleed on the head with a knife placed on the vein, and they strike it with a stick so that it should draw blood, and also they take some herbs as a beverage to cure themselves.

In all the country there is no town which exceeds one thousand six hundred inhabitants, and of these there are few, and there are no walled towns or castles, but villages without number. The houses generally, or most of them, are round, and all of one story, covered with terraces or thatch, and courtyards round them. People generally sleep on ox-hides, others on beds made of straps of the same hides; no kind of table. They eat in flat trenchers, like trays of great width, without napkins or tablecloths. They have basins of very black earthenware like jet, and pipkins of the same clay for drinking water and wine. Many eat raw meat, and others eat it roasted on the ashes, others roasted over woodfire, and others over cowdung where there is no wood. There is much wax there, and tapers and candles; they do not make candles of tallow. There is no oil there except a kind which they call *hena*, and which is made from some herbs like Mayweed;[2] it has no taste, and is beautiful as gold. There

[1] *Alegue*, an Emperor. [2] *Pampilhos*, also called *olho de boy*.

8: Rey G-5 (1910-1920)1935
MP5 Amhara MP5

threw it down, cut steaks from it which they devoured rapidly, and then drove the cow on again, plastering up the wound with mud. The second (which is given with a wealth of detail too revolting to repeat) was at a regular banquet at which a live cow was brought in and strips cut from it by all the guests until the animal died, which took some time.

Salt states that Pearce actually saw an example of the first instance quoted above, which he says is by no means uncommon, but he disbelieves the second instance. No other writer that I am acquainted with recounts any such instance *of his own knowledge*, and the suggestion that such a practice ever existed is hotly denied in the country. Nor could I find any evidence of the existence of such a habit either as to the present or the past. Personally I am inclined to disbelieve the stories or to regard them as gross exaggerations, or possibly as isolated instances.

Be that as it may, the raw meat dietary, however, is undoubtedly very popular to-day, and it may be of interest if I give an extract from my diary describing a great *Gebur*, or banquet given at the Feast of Maskal, which we attended, and at which no fewer than 15,000 soldiers and 2000 or 3000 palace retainers were fed in four relays in the great hall. This is the more interesting in that for some years past Europeans have not been admitted to the *Gebur*, and although one was held on our last visit we were not present.

The *Gebur*

"We were received by the Court Chamberlain on the large stone terrace outside the *aderatch*, and after a

8: Rey G-5 (1910-1920)1935
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574 short interval led through rooms wrapped in darkness
● 264 to the banqueting hall, at one end of which was a large raised platform shut in by closely drawn white curtains. Here, seated on a dais, was the Empress, surrounded by Abyssinian notables, and after paying our respects to Her Majesty, Ras Tafari, and others, we were conducted to the table prepared for Europeans on one side of the platform—there were about fifteen of us. At the opposite side of the platform the Ras and the principal chiefs sat down at another table, whilst in the middle green silk curtains were drawn round the Empress' dais, so that she should be hidden from the vulgar eye whilst eating; a constant stream of attendants bearing every conceivable kind of receptacle, from beautifully wrought gold dishes to enamelled iron mugs, passed in and out of her little tent.

"After we had had an excellent, if somewhat lengthy, meal, consisting of a mixed assortment of European and Abyssinian courses, the white curtains by which the platform was shut in were pulled back, shewing the hall packed with long low tables as closely as they could be got in, the tables being covered with slabs of Abyssinian bread enclosing quantities of cooked cut-up meat.

"To the sound of bugles and trumpets the main doors were opened and in poured the chiefs with their soldiery, who had come up to Addis Ababa for the feast from all over the country; the organization was admirable, and though some 5000 men filled the hall there was no sort of scrambling or disorder whatever.

"They set to work at once on the *hors-d'œuvres*, and then the *pièces de résistance* arrived. Hundreds of pairs of men came in, each pair carrying between them a long

8: Rey G-5 (1910-1920)1935
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stout pole, from which hung huge pieces of red raw meat, covered with strips of red and gold cloth.

"These men stood closely together all along the tables and one on each side, so that the meat hung down from the poles over the tables just in front of the diners. The guests produced knives, and feeling the joint with their fingers to pick out a tender bit, rapidly sliced off strips of meat, which they put into their mouths, cutting off what would not go in quite close to their lips, an operation which, from personal experience, I know demands great skill if one's nose is not to suffer—as the cut is always made upwards.

"After ample libations of *tej* and *araki* (native mead, or hydromel and spirit) the diners filed out in perfect order, and the stage was cleared for the next party.

"The whole function had lasted nearly four hours and the Ras must have been heartily glad when it was over, for he had previously dined one instalment of 5000 warriors, and two more were to follow—between 17,000 and 18,000 in all partaking of the royal hospitality."

Broundo may be a nourishing form of diet tending to the development of warlike qualities, but its consumption has one serious drawback at all events, in that it is the cause of taenia (or tapeworm), a disease which is almost universal in the country. So much is this the case indeed that it is a recognized practice for all, high and low, to take monthly as a "taenicide" a dose of a plant known as *kousso*, which is so violent in its effects as to incapacitate the patient from work or occupation for the day.

Christians will not touch meat unless it is killed by

8: Rey G-5 (1910-1920)1935
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784 Christians will not touch meat unless it is killed by
795 one of themselves, nor will Moslems eat any which has been killed by a Christian. We had one Moslem with us when we were on trek, and as he would not eat the ox which my other men had killed he bought a whole sheep for himself, and killed and ate it himself; none of the other men would touch an atom of it, even when their own supply ran out and they had no meat at all.

262 Of course the comparatively high price of meat (for
252 an Abyssinian) prevents the too frequent consumption of *broundo* amongst the people, and their tastes in everyday food are simple. Bread is their mainstay. This is found in many varieties; some of it soft, slightly sour in taste, and pale brown in colour; the most popular is of flour made from *teff* or millet seed, mixed to a thick paste with water and then poured into a large rough slightly concave iron receptacle and cooked over an open fire, without grease or fat of any kind. When finished this bread takes the form and aspect of large pancakes, twelve to eighteen inches in diameter, and is very good, especially when eaten with jam or butter; we always ate it ourselves when on trek. The native eats with it a kind of mash of lentils or dried peas, ground and cooked, and mixed with butter and a very hot red sauce which is produced from the chilli; this latter is very widely cultivated in several varieties all over the country.

263 The amount of pepper that is put into their cooked dishes is as a rule disastrous to the European palate at the first time of trying, and how they can swallow the fiery compounds that they do passes my comprehension —their tongues and palates must be made of leather.

● 26 All food, including meat, is eaten with the fingers amongst all classes, a piece of bread being broken off,

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wrapped round the portion of other foodstuff to be eaten, and the whole put bodily into the mouth.

I happened on one occasion to call on an Abyssinian chieftain, a ruler of a distant province who was visiting Addis and who was a particular friend of mine, just as he was sitting down to a late lunch in his *tukul* surrounded by his principal vassal chiefs. I had to sit down on the divan next to him; and as he was of course eating *à l'Abyssine* his cook kept on rolling up succulent morsels of terrifically hot curry or stewed meat or raw flesh in bread with his fingers, and pressing them on my jaded palate. Any of his chiefs whom he desired to honour was similarly distinguished, that is to say, he would select a tit-bit, give it to the cook who doctored it up and passed it to a slave, who conveyed it to the fortunate recipient, who ate it with great gusto. And fingers all round all the time!

Except for some few individuals who have acquired the habit in Europe or from Europeans, smoking, curiously enough, is practically non-existent among Abyssinians although the tobacco plant grows freely, and the Gallas make a sort of rough coarse tobacco which is possible, though hardly pleasant. The practice was somewhat drastically discouraged by the late Emperor Johannes (Theodore's successor), who is said to have punished smoking by cutting off the offender's lips, and snuffing by removing his nose. I was unsuccessful in ascertaining the cause of their objection to smoking, one of the various obviously inadequate reasons being that the use of tobacco was condemned because the plant was supposed to have grown originally out of the tomb of the heretic Arius! A more probable explanation is that the practice was regarded as a

11:Levine Z-4,5 (1958-1961)1965 MP5 Amhara MP5

622 621 794 rounding a local church, and therefore "parish" may be the more appropriate term for it than village. The *chĭqā shum* and the local church authorities work closely on occasion, particularly in connection with the construction and maintenance of church buildings.

*565 79 182 The church represents the third main link between the peasant hamlet and the broader Abyssinian life. As the peasant depends on the local market to mediate between his production unit and the external economy, and on the *chĭqā shum* to mediate between his domestic polity and the higher political authorities, so he depends on the local clergy to mediate between his home culture and the "high culture" of Abyssinia as embodied in the institutions of the Orthodox Church.

The peasant supports the church by following its main ritual requirements and by contributing, according to his means, a certain quantity of grain each year. If the peasant works land owned by the church, a considerable part of his produce is transmitted automatically to individual priests, or gifts are offered to the church according to the occasion. In return, the church symbolizes for him the integrity of his moral order and provides moral support during personal crisis.

*565 Such, in broad outline, is the structural setting of peasant life among the Amhara.

THE WORLD OF ACTIVITY

*565 512 *The Daily Round*

Work begins in the peasant's home well before daybreak. His wife or maidservant rises with the first cockcrow to grind grain. It is pitch dark as she feels her way across the earthen floor and begins to push and pull a large flat stone over little heaps of barley, wheat, or *tĕff*.

An hour or two later cold light seeps in through cracks in the door and, if it is in bad repair, the thatched roof. The noises of chickens and livestock become more audible, and the rest of the household begins to stir. The man of the house starts his day by reciting a prayer or, if he has some education, by reading a passage from some sacred text. Then he or one of the boys takes the oxen and cows out for breakfast, to a pile of hay in the yard or a spot of pasture rich with grass. Donkeys, mules, and perhaps horses are also sent to graze.

One of the women pokes the embers that spent the night under a blanket of ash. She blows them into flame through a bamboo pipe, filling the room with smoke and her eyes with tears. Over the fire she sets a clay pot to warm up leftover pepper sauce. The peasant sits on a sheepskin spread over the clay bench that adjoins the wall. Water is poured from a gourd for him to wash his hands, and *ĭnjarā* and sauce are brought for his breakfast. He eats by himself, slowly, pondering the work for the day.

11:Levine Z-4,5 (1958-1961)1965 MP5 Amhara MP5

When he has eaten and washed his hands, the children take their breakfast quickly. One or two of them then lead the remaining animals out to pasture—the cows, which have already been brought back and milked; the sheep and goats; the young draft animals. They spend the day roaming the hills with their flocks in the company of shepherds from nearby farms, unless it is harvest time when each must stay close to his family's fields where the herds feed on stalks and chaff.

The peasant leaves with his older sons or manservants for the fields. (If it is a fasting day, they go directly to work without any breakfast.) The day's activity may consist of cutting the ripe crops with a fine-toothed sickle, or threshing the harvest under the hooves of cattle and mules, or winnowing grain by tossing it up in the breeze. More often than not it will consist of plowing, virtually a year-round occupation. For each crop a field must be plowed at least twice: first to loosen the crusted soil, and then to cover up the seed that has been sown. Planting occurs in several months, the schedule varying according to region. In some regions, for example, barley, wheat, and chick-peas are sown in September and October; corn, beans, and peas in May and June; and *tēff* in July. In many areas a January planting is also common. The central position of plowing in the world of the Amhara peasant is shown by the fact that the word for his vocation, *ĭrshā*, literally means "plowing."

On plowing days, the wooden plow with its single iron share and the yoke are carried to the field, and the oxen are driven along with sticks and shouts. If it is sowing time, bags of seed are loaded on donkeys which join the procession. On his way to work the peasant is likely to see a neighbor at a distance and cries of "How did you spend the night?" are exchanged. At the field the team of oxen is yoked and the work begins. It lasts for about five hours, and the peasant is indeed wretched who does not have a helper with whom to take turns steering the heavy plow and cracking the whip as the oxen trace furrow after furrow.

The peasant's wife is too busy in the morning to sit down for a regular breakfast, so she takes bites of food at will as she works about the house. There is much ado in the house as she and her daughters, and perhaps maidservants, carry out a variety of chores—baking *ĭnjarā*, preparing *ţallā*, spinning cotton, collecting dung for fuel, sweeping rubbish off the floor, carrying water from the spring, weaving straw baskets or mats. The impression of business is heightened by the chickens, which hop in and out of the house as they please, though they must be shooed away from grain drying in the sun.

Toward noon a fresh batch of pepper sauce is prepared. If the peasant is working in a distant field, his wife carries lunch out to him—or else risks being beaten with a stick. If he is not too far away he comes home for lunch, which he eats together with his wife. They talk about what each has done in

11:Levine Z-4,5 (1958-1961)1965 MP5 Amhara MP5

*565 512 462 [854] [853] the morning and what remains to be done. The peasant may retire for a nap, and perhaps to lie with his wife, before taking up the afternoon's work. He returns for about three more hours of plowing after his noon rest. The afternoon sun burns down on him; the plow is harder to wield; he plods on. At home the women continue their work, no sooner finishing one task than they attend to another. The mother puts the child who rides on her back to the breast whenever it cries.

*565 512 233 857 [262] The shepherds do not come home for lunch. They have taken some *ǐnjarā* or *dābo* ("whole wheat bread") along with them. In harvest months they enjoy a special treat, roasting grains or pulse which they have snatched from somebody's field. Though their responsibility is great—a boy will be whipped if an animal in his charge gets hurt or lost or if it gets into fields of grain—their work is light. They spend the day running idly, practicing war chants, playing at various adult activities. Their mood is as free as the great spaces about them. As the day grows hotter they are likely to discard their sheepskin [291] covering and move about naked. Toward dusk, the shepherds' spirits quicken. Their songs become more excited; lively melodies are heard from their wooden flutes. It is time to go home to family, supper, and fire.

*565 512 When father and sons enter after the day's work, they start munching on roasted grains, *ǐnjarā*, or *dābo*. They may drink some *ṭallā* and relax. It begins to get chilly. The room is dark and smoky, the fleas bite them—but it is the easiest time of the day. The family is together, and everyone enjoys talking and hearing about the homely events of the day. A few hours after dark, sup- [264] per is served. Parents and older children eat together out of a common basket. Younger children and servants stand respectfully, awaiting their turn, grateful if someone places a large bite of food in their mouths.

[515] [782] [513] [352] After dinner there is a great washing of feet—the father's by his wife or children, the others' by themselves. The peasant recites or reads his evening prayers and lies down on his bed made of strips of cowhide. The children settle for the night on the clay benches. Last of all, the mother covers the embers with ashes, sets out the grain she must grind before dawn, and places her weary body next to that of her husband's.

*565 512 527 This grueling schedule is not repeated every day. On nearly half the days in each month heavy labor is not permitted—men may not plow or harvest, women may not grind or spin. These are holy days: Saturdays and Sundays (both of which are honored as the Sabbath in Abyssinia) and the monthly and annual commemorations of the saints.

*565 512 527 462 [524] The woman's schedule on such days is only lightened, not radically altered. Food and drink must still be prepared and served. Except for a possible trip to church with her husband Sunday morning before breakfast, a woman's hours are still confined to the home compound and its obligations. The shepherds must still take care of their herds, though some boys may get together for

11:Levine Z-4,5 (1958-1961)1965 MP5 Amhara MP5

ically established cycle) is the only way to catch malaria. We Ethiopians know better. We know that one can *also* catch malaria from drinking the water in places where the Anopheles breed."[25]

The ambivalence toward Western science represented by this statement and by the persistence of analogous attitudes among many educated Ethiopians undoubtedly brings the individuals in question a degree of security that would be lost were they to abandon the traditional, unscientific belief system *in toto*. Perhaps a more solid sort of security could be derived from a program of education which not only imparts scientific information and attitudes, but also educates people to adapt themselves to the changes which the introduction of science involves.

Taste.—In matters of taste, Ethiopia's modern adolescents range from extreme traditionalism to extreme Westernism, with most of them preferring both traditional and European or American patterns in varying proportions. Of food the students tend to prefer the traditional varieties, most popular of which are *doro wat* and *ĭnjarā*. Among Western foods they are fondest of pastries and Italian *pasta*. On the other hand, they are more inclined toward Western beverages than Ethiopian ones. The most popular Western beverages are, for the secondary students, soft drinks, and for the college students, beer; among Ethiopian drinks they prefer *ṭallā* first and milk second.

With regard to their manner of eating, the students' taste is traditional in that most prefer to eat nowhere but within the home, and to eat with their hands rather than use silverware; but it is Westernized in that most prefer eating at their own individual places rather than all together with others out of a common *ĭnjarā* basket. Opinion is most divided on the matter of exchanging *gurshā*, a morsel of food which one places in another's mouth. The slight majority who reject this old custom do so because they find it "noisy," "childish," "unsanitary," or simply "out of fashion"; while those who still enjoy it do so chiefly because it "expresses affection."

On questions of dress it should be noted that traditionally the Amhara have sentimentalized their going barefoot as well as their national costume. But because of the practical advantages of wearing tailored clothes at work and using shoes, and perhaps still more because of their high prestige in the modernizing sector, virtually all of the students prefer the European fashion in these matters. On the other hand, with respect to women's wear and the sort of dress to be worn on holidays, the great majority opt the Ethiopian *shammā*.

In their aesthetic interests the students' taste varies considerably according to the medium. With regard to poetry and music, Ethiopian forms are preferred to Western ones, while Western forms of painting and dance are more popular with them than Ethiopian. Poetry stands as the most appreciated of

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191 155 rhythm and rhyme of words as an epicure with a palatable viand or intoxicating old wine. . . . Like the infant, his affective state can only be pacified through a rhythmical expression of pleasurable sounds.[8]

The Amharic language itself registers a certain sensibility to the nature of poetry as an oral outlet. Agreeable and pleasing language is characterized in Amharic by the same word which is used to characterize particularly pleasing food: "*tāfata*" ("it is sweet"). The introduction to the *Chronicles* of Emperor [539] Galawdewos is but the literary embellishment of a type of statement which could be made by any Amhara:

> We commence here this beautiful narrative, of more pleasing taste to the mouth . . . than honey and sugar, which will bring pleasure to those who hear it and will give, to those who understand it, a joy like that given by song and wine.[9]

155 828 [826] The incorporation of knowledge no less than the enjoyment of words is conceived in explicitly oral terms in Amharic. The stomach is regarded as the seat of wisdom, and in the language of schoolboys the diligent student is one who has thoroughly "drunk his lesson." The experiencing of one's school as an Alma Mater is probably quite intense; as one tenth-grade student wrote in a contribution to his school newspaper, "Oh! Mother School! There is nothing like school! As a mother feeds her children with milk and bread, so does a school feed her children, the pupils, with education."[10]

155 261 574 527 [575] [794] Eating and drinking for their own sake, beyond what is required for nutrition, form perhaps the most obvious medium for oral erotism, and one that is cultivated to a notable degree among the Amhara. Feasting is called for on every possible occasion—christenings, funerals, and memorial services, as well as engagements, weddings, and annual holidays. The chief purpose of the only voluntary association in traditional Amhara society, the religious fraternal association known as the *māhebar,* is to eat and drink in honor of a certain saint on his day every month. The duration of any large celebration is said to depend on how long the food and drink last; successful ones go on for three days. Linguistic usage stresses the oral function on such occasions. One "eats at," rather than attends, a christening party; one "drinks in," rather than belongs to, a *māhebar;* one expects to "eat at," rather than dance at, somebody's wedding. The very word for Easter, "*Fāsiqā,*" literally means "great feast."

155 261 264 The activity of eating is colored by a number of conventions which express its great emotional significance. The mood at mealtime is supposed to be deeply serious. Food is to be masticated aloud, indicating a total involvement with the task at hand. Not to let others hear one chewing, like eating by oneself, also is taken to imply greed. The usual obligation to stand when somebody enters the room is waived when one is eating. "Grain is king," says an

11:Levine Z-4,5 (1958-1961)1965 MP5 Amhara MP5

Amharic proverb, and even the Emperor when visiting a school expects students to remain seated if they are at the dining table when he arrives.

Some indication of the comparative significance of this concern about eating and drinking in the Amhara psyche is afforded by a recent cross-cultural investigation of dreams. Obtained from samples of young male respondents in Ethiopia, Nigeria, and the United States, the dreams were evaluated with respect to the presence or absence of themes of "manifest orality": scenes of someone desiring, looking for, or consuming food or drink. The proportion of Ethiopian respondents (mostly Orthodox Amhara from the Gondar area) who revealed manifest orality in their dreams was found to be *64 per cent*. By contrast, the proportion of those in a sample of non-Muslim Nigerians whose dreams showed manifest orality was 38 per cent, and that in the sample of Americans was only 22 per cent.[11]

The Amhara custom of giving *gurshā* plays up the erotic component of eating. *Gurshā* means "mouthful" and, as already noted, refers to a wad of food which one places in another's mouth, usually as a gesture of affection. *Gurshā* are exchanged between husband and wife and among relatives and friends. They are often given to children, especially in families of higher status, and to favored servants and retainers as well. The *gurshā* is of such meaning in Amhara experience that it is referred to in a number of Amharic idioms. First of all it means a present or a tip—literally, *pourmanger*. It also refers to the charge of a gun: the gun is a beloved object, and a *gurshā* is what one places in its mouth. In contemporary usage, it refers to flashlight batteries.

In connection with love and many other subjects, a good deal of the imagery of Amharic verse relates in one way or another to eating and drinking. The following sample of proverbs and couplets may convey some of the flavor of this phenomenon:

Ṭajj• has no specks; a poor man has no friends.

• • •

[Use] proverbs in conversation; [drink] *ṭajj* in a carafe.

• • •

Hand and fly-whisk; mouth and *ĭnjarā*† [go together].

• • •

No matter how much one plows, nothing tastes so good as *goman*.‡

• *Ṭajj*, it may be remembered, is the Ethiopian wine made of honey.

† *Injarā* is the staple pancake.

‡ *Goman* is a kind of cabbage plant that requires no plow cultivation.

11:Levine Z-4,5 (1958-1961)1965 MP5 Amhara MP5

To make me forget you, this medicine is right:
Food and water, sleep and the night.

• • •

Love and porridge must be taken while hot;
Once cool, those who would taste are a lot.

• • •

The *ĭnjarā* I have, my lass;
I wait for you the *wat** to pass.†

• • •

Your father and your mother have vowed to keep from meat;
But you, their very daughter, innards do you eat.‡

Eating and drinking provide expressive symbolism in social interaction as well as in verse. They form the primary axis of social life among the Amhara. The exchange of *gurshā* is but a specialized form of the general pattern of expressing sociability through feeding and being fed. Camaraderie consists to a large extent of eating from the same *ĭnjarā* basket, and the etymology of the word for "friend," *bălĭnjarā,* is the same as that for the English "companion," someone with whom one shares bread. At any indoor gathering barley beer is served continuously. The visit of a guest at any time of day calls for "a little coffee," a euphemism for as much food and drink as the host can command. In some Amhara areas a special kind of spirit, the *ĭonin,* is assigned the specific task of punishing persons who infringe the etiquette of dispensing and receiving food.[12]

From this it is but a short step to politics and morals. The production of large banquets is one of the essential arts of government in Abyssinia—*panem,* if not *circenses.* The stature of a big man depends partly upon the number of persons who customarily dine at his expense. A man's Christianity, moreover, is judged by his generosity in feeding others, a virtue that is eulogized at times by parading his *ĭnjarā* baskets around the field. A truly Christian Amhara is known by the regularity and scale with which he prepares memorial feasts for his departed kin, drinks in some religious fraternal association, and holds an annual feast (*zĭker*) in which food is distributed to the poor.

Oral activity is prominent, moreover, not only as a primary source of

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* *Wat* is the sauce in which the *ĭnjarā* is dipped.

† The gold meaning is: "I'll wait for you until the others leave."

‡ "To eat someone's innards" is an idiom meaning: "to make him fall in love." The gold meaning is thus: "You made me love you."

11:Levine Z-4,5 (1958-1961)1965 MP5 Amhara MP5

consequence of substantial loss of accustomed mother love at the time of weaning—a mild but chronic state of mourning which gives a depressive undertone to the rest of life—is certainly one of the more evident characteristics of most Amhara.[22] At the same time the Amhara child is made anxious about his actual oral gratifications. He no longer eats whenever he wants to, but only after he has waited for the adults to finish their meal. He is no longer entitled to the choicest food, mother's milk, but to poorer food and leftovers. And he is made increasingly aware of the adult anxieties about eating connected with the fasting requirements, and with the food shortages of the rainy season.

Applying the Whiting-Child hypotheses in the light of these observations one may characterize the development of an ambivalent preoccupation with the oral zone by Amhara as follows: an initially very high level of oral satisfaction enjoyed during the nursing period makes oral gratification a particularly attractive source of pleasure as well as a desired refuge for the psyche under the pressure of later deprivations; while the emotional and nutritional deprivations which the Amhara child experiences toward the end of the nursing period and thereafter undermine the sense of security acquired during his indulged infancy and make him anxious about the fount of that security, oral gratification.*

Whatever the precise ontogenetic basis of this phenomenon may prove to be, the Amhara's ambivalent preoccupation with orality is projected at the *cultural* level in the form of two contrasting human ideals. The secular masculine ideal in Amhara culture is a hero of oral gratification and prowess. He is a man who eats much and drinks much, and who excels in litigation, in declaiming the martial chants, and in composing veiled insults. The religious ideal, on the other hand, is a hero of oral renunciation. The most devout Amhara are considered those who keep all of the fasts, even the esoteric ones; or even, as monks and ascetics, live on a fasting diet the year round—in the extreme case, feed on leaves as hermits. The association of religious virtuosity with oral renunciation reaches its logical climax in legends about Gabra Manfas Qeddus ("Servant of the Holy Spirit"), the most hallowed Amhara saint. In contrast with the normal Amhara boy who nurses for close to three years, Gabra Manfas Qeddus is said to have been at his mother's breast for only three months, when a bird swept down one day and carried him away.

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* While this formulation may leave more questions unanswered than it solves—a purely behaviorist formula inevitably neglects the dynamics of defensive operations and the significance of ambivalence—it carries us as far as our data permit and may provide a useful point of departure for further discussion and investigation of Amhara psychology.

11:Levine Z-4,5 (1958-1961)1965 MP5 Amhara MP5

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FIG. 34.—*Offering a gurshā*

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FIG. 35.—*Singing out the master's qenē*

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FIG. 36.—*Amhara litigants* [P. 238-A]

11:Levine Z-4,5 (1958-1961)1965 MP5 Amhara MP5

*121 571 • 264 181 [829] A similar spirit is observed in Amhara commensality. Meals are customarily eaten from a common *ĭnjarā* basket. The sauce is ladled onto the center of the *ĭnjarā*, and is consumed ensemble by those sitting around the basket as they dip into it with pieces of *ĭnjarā* broken off from the edges. Traditional Amhara scoff at what they regard as the excessively individualistic Western custom of sitting each person down to a separate place at the table and thus depriving the meal hour of what they feel should be its basically communal tone.

*121 574 571 181 At a more formal level of interaction this disposition is expressed in the form of *hospitality*. Amhara hospitality is luxuriously attentive and thoughtful. For example, if there is foreknowledge of a guest's arrival, he is awaited at some distance from his destination and escorted with much to-do into the home. His mule is at once unsaddled and given to feed. The guest is given a place of honor in the home, and a glass of *ṭallā* is immediately brought for him. Amhara etiquette prescribes, moreover, that a glass is not properly filled unless it overflows; and it is repeatedly filled to overflowing whenever the guest has drunk some portion of the beverage. As a gratuitous gesture of good faith, the host—or his wife, or servant—tastes some of the beverage first, a sign that no "medicine" has been added. Before long the wicker table is produced, and the guest and his party are served copiously—no matter what time of day they arrive (unless, of course, it is a fasting day). When the guest has eaten to satisfaction, the host will insist that he eat some more, by repeatedly issuing injunctions like *tegābǎzu* ("Help yourselves!"), *moḳar* ("Try!"), or *āfar sehon* ("If I become dust!"—i.e., "If you do not eat you will be condemning me to death"). The Amhara host is also likely to insist that his guest spend the night. The guest's feet will be washed, and the host's bed will be given to him, or long grass will be cut for bedding on the floor. At the time of farewell, the host and his attendants follow the guest and his party a good distance along the road. The guest continually cries, "Return! Return!" and the host agrees but continues to serve as escort.

Such hospitality is not wantonly bestowed upon the casual wayfarer. Normally it is reserved for those who qualify as worthy guests: relatives, friends, [609] or persons of high rank. Nonetheless, there does exist among the Amhara some feeling that even the unknown stranger should be shown hospitality, for he is *ya-egziābhĕr engedā* ("a guest of God"). Travelers are generally assured [485] that somebody somewhere will show them hospitality; there are no inns in traditional Ethiopia, for it is considered wrong to exchange food and lodging for money.

*121 576 571 181 Related to this pattern of hospitality is a delicate sense of *respect* that the Amhara displays toward all comers; often, even toward his enemies. When two Amhara pass each other anywhere, they are expected to bow slightly and say: "How did you pass the night?" or "How did you spend the day?" If they

also excite the buda's interests. The buda's remaining victims are people he sees eating ordrinking in public, particularly while the buda himself is hungry or thirsty. In all cases, the buda concentrates upon the part of his victim's anatomy that initially attracted him, and through it introjects his invisible buda aspect into the victim's abdomen. Unknown by the victim, the buda sets about dining on the latter's viscera; only later that day do the initial symptoms---nausea, vomiting, torpor---become evident. By nightfall, the unique symptoms of buda possession begin. The victim no longer complains of nausea, and vomiting ceases; now oblivious of his surroundings, he alternates periods of vacant staring with violent frenzies, during which he attempts to tear off his clothes and seeks reunion with the roaming hyenas. If forcibly restrained, he grits his teeth edge-to-edge, rigidly holds his flexed limbs close to his body, and compresses fingers against palms, thumbs inward; to onlookers, he appears as a human hyena. At dawn, the victim's frenzy dissipates, and he lies abed, greatly fatigued by the nocturnal exertions and severly weakened by the buda's feasting. At nightfall, the frenetic drama is repeated, and, unless the buda is exorcised soon, the victim's death becomes certain.

Yisew ayn ("the person's eye") shares important similarities with buda powers. It is exercised involun-

12:Young E-4,5 (1966) 1971 MP5 Amhara MP5
Begemder

754 drome in a victim.

[826] *[192] The buda is attracted to 1) persons of "good blood" (tiruw dem sew: someone with a light, clear and unblemished complexion, or, by extension, with another particularly attractive, konjow, aspect of his body) and [264] 2) persons observed eating or drinking, particularly when the buda is hungry or thirsty. While concentrating on that aspect of the victim which attracted him (e.g., the face of the child of good blood, or the diner's mouth), the buda introjects his invisible self into the victim's body. Once inside, he sets to eating the viscera, simultaneously laying eggs from which prodigious numbers of wosfat hatch out. About two-thirds of his victims are children of ten years or less.

*753 754 His victim is never aware of the disease act taking place, and symptoms of the ailment appear only later in the day, as the wosfat hatched by the buda vent their rapacity on the sickman's stomach and heart. Thus, he experiences nausea, vomiting and fatigue. At nightfall the first of the ailment's dramatic symptoms appear, as the buda acknowledges his presence.[53] Complaints of nausea and stomach pain stop, as the sickman grows oblivious to

[53] Bibuda tabalac, "seized by the buda", is also a common nomer for this ailment.